

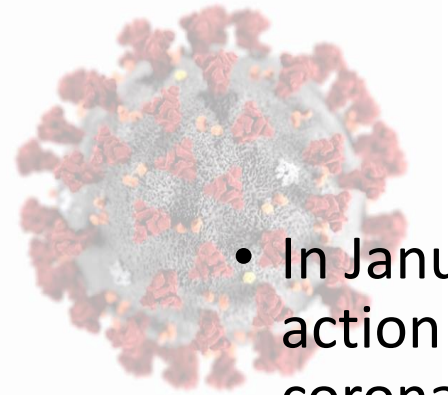


# COVID-19 After Action Report

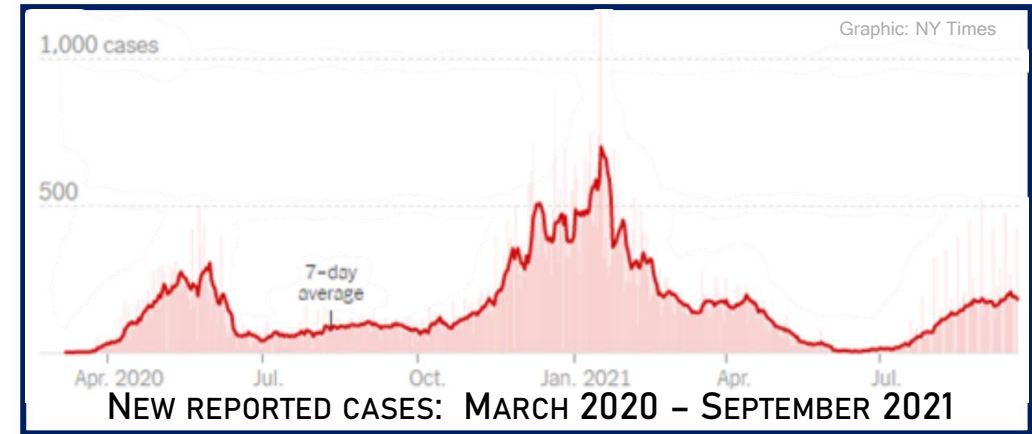
March 1, 2022 Public Safety Committee

Appendix



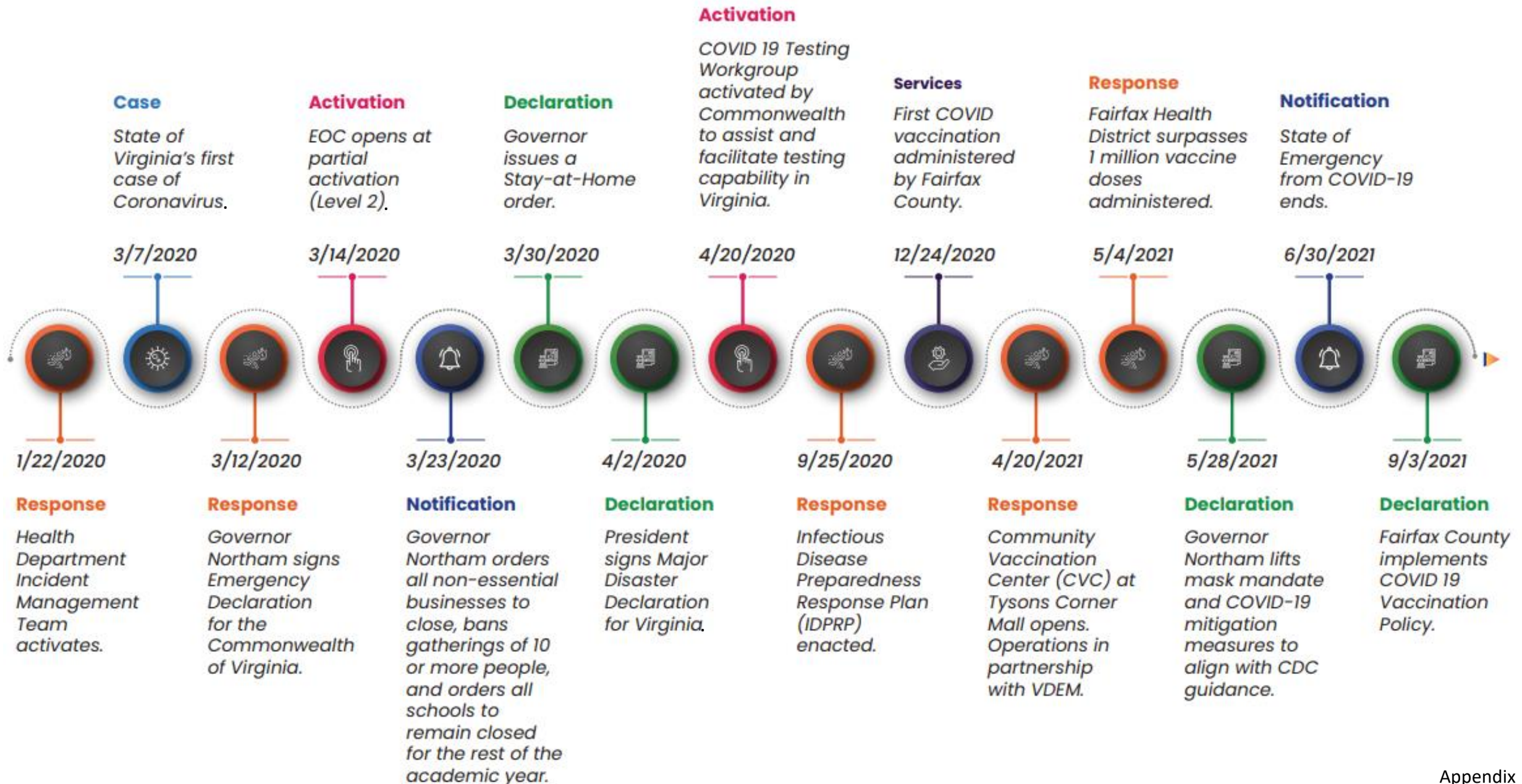


- In January 2020, Fairfax County began taking action to prepare for the impacts of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19.
- This lengthy COVID-19 response has significantly tested the county's emergency response infrastructure as well as the ability of the county to continue normal business operations and services to the community.
- The initial response phase lasted from January 2020 to June 2020. Emergency declarations, stay-at-home orders, PPE shortages, continuity operations, and the transition to maximized virtual operations and telework all occurred during this phase.
- After the first six months, the response transitioned into a 'new normal' of county operations from July 2020 to June 2021. In this phase, the county focused on re-opening paused programs and services, returning to in-person and hybrid work postures, and continuing to respond to effects of the pandemic.



## COVID-19 AAR: Part 1

## COVID-19 Timeline





- COVID-19 pushed Fairfax County Government agencies to adjust programs and service delivery models to ensure essential services continued to function within the restrictions forced by the pandemic environment.
- Changes made during the pandemic have the potential to reset expectations for county operations for the long-term.
- Aligning lessons learned from the pandemic to Strategic Plan Community Outcome Areas can help inform Board actions that move the county toward success in reaching strategic goals.

### Strategic Plan's Community Outcome Areas



Cultural and Recreational Opportunities



Environment



Lifelong Education and Learning



Economic Opportunity



Health



Mobility and Transportation



Effective and Efficient Government



Housing and Neighborhood Livability



Safety and Security



Empowerment for Residents Facing Vulnerability

- Recommendations for Part 1 of the AAR most robustly align with four strategic plan outcome areas.
- Part 2 of the review process is expected to find recommendations that align with the remaining six strategic plan outcome areas.

### County AAR Part 1 Focus Areas

- County Agency Response
- Government Operations
- Communications
- Effective and Efficient Government
- Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability
- Health
- Safety and Security

### County AAR Part 2 Focus Areas

- County Program Changes
- Government Operations
- Cultural and Recreational Opportunities
- Economic Opportunities
- Environment
- Housing and Neighborhood Livability
- Lifelong Education and Learning
- Mobility and Transportation



## Strengths

- Staff were appreciative of the Board and county leadership's flexibility that allowed agencies to implement plans and pivot operations to meet the changing needs of the pandemic. As an example, the transition to telework went smoothly due to pre-existing telework policies, various pilot programs specific to virtual operations that were being tested, and significant infrastructure and technology investments by the Board.
- **Opportunity:** Continue to be forward-looking with potential development of new programs and plans related to telework that may better position county agencies for future disaster response.



## Strengths

- The creation of an ad-hoc Workforce Protection Group (WFPG) to address a multitude of issues affecting staff in the pandemic environment. The team's collaboration was a significant success in addressing workforce health and safety and risk management issues throughout the pandemic.
  - **Opportunity:** Formalize policies and procedures for a permanent WFPG and evaluate the number of county agencies represented. Integrate the WFPG into COOP and emergency planning to ensure activation in future events.
- Many county agencies found their Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans to be helpful in responding to COVID-19 and were able to effectively implement COOP concepts to continue mission essential functions, continue normal operations, and deliver critical services to the community.



- **Area for Improvement:** Staff burnout and mental health strain were significant challenges as the prolonged duration and sustained high workload of the response to the pandemic resulted in cascading problems and hardships on employees.
- **Recommendation:** Evaluate expansion of employee assistance resources, like those utilized by public safety agencies, for critical incident stress management.







- **Area for Improvement:** Existing pandemic planning was at a high, framework level. Each agency required actionable strategies and tactics that could be implemented in response to the COVID pandemic for their own operations.
- **Recommendation:** Develop a more comprehensive county pandemic plan based on COVID-19 lessons learned. Ensure countywide education and awareness of the plan and roles and responsibilities, as necessary.



- **Area for Improvement:** Opportunities to augment, amplify, and maximize staffing in the response to COVID-19 can be enhanced.
- **Recommendation:** Establish a policy designation and mechanism that allows for rapid reassignment of county personnel across agencies/roles to improve emergency response staffing. There is a need to build understanding and staff capability to respond in any situation. As an example, the development of EOC bench depth that pulls from all agencies should be pursued, and the evaluation of a countywide Incident Management Team (IMT).



## Strengths

- The county quickly supported enhanced safety measures for the workforce, including supplying PPE and cleaning supplies, enhancing cleaning protocols, social distancing measures, signage, plexiglass, contract tracing, virtual communication methods, and other safety protocols.
- The development and implementation of the countywide single point ordering (SPO) system early in the pandemic, and the coordination with the EOC Logistics Section for resource needs were successes. Being the first time the SPO was implemented, there were improvements made as the roll-out occurred to increase effectiveness for the response.



- **Area for Improvement:** Hiring, recruitment, and retention are some of the most significant challenges for the county moving forward. As an example, a significant culture shift to telework has accelerated, the county could face difficulties with hiring and retention, especially as the private sector moves ahead of the culture shifts.
- **Recommendation:** Determine how the county will approach the shift in workplace culture to ensure staffing levels are not negatively impacted.





- **Area for Improvement:** Coordination between the EOC Logistics Section and the Department of Purchasing and Material Management (DPMM) for inventory management and identifying resources could be further improved.
- **Recommendation:** Collaborate with a cross-county, inter-agency team to define requirements for a comprehensive inventory management system and explore solutions that meet county needs. Procurement and implementation of the system should be a priority moving forward.



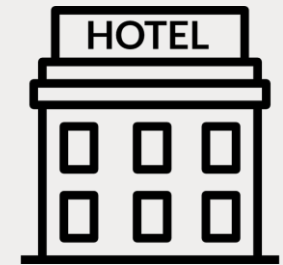
## Strengths

- Frequent communication and updates were successful for coordination and collaboration throughout the COVID-19 response. As part of the response, county agencies increased the amount of coordination meetings, both internally and with partner organizations, to facilitate a better coordinated response. As an example, the interagency EOC calls, frequent Senior Management Team meetings, and the HR Supervisors calls.
- The county job matching program for reassigning staff to fill gaps and provide surge staff support was a significant success.
  - **Opportunity:** Build upon the successes of the ad-hoc county job matching program, based on a new county policy, to provide increased opportunities to address the many staffing challenges during future disasters.



## Strengths

- The establishment of non-congregate shelters (QPID hotels) for our most vulnerable residents provided significant opportunities to expand shelter capabilities and capacities with countywide partners.
- Budget/Financial staff issued comprehensive monthly updates on the status of CARES, ARPA, and other funds that the county applied for and received for use related to the pandemic.



2,188

clients served at quarantine,  
protection, isolation,  
decompression (QPID) hotels



- **Area for Improvement:** Due to increasing food insecurity, increased coordination is needed with the food provider community. Better define a clearinghouse process for future emergency food distributions.
- **Recommendation:** The Emergency Food Strategy Team (EFST) has worked together to create and implement the Emergency Food Access Response Plan (EFRAP). DEMS will work with this group to ensure the emergency response coordination is in place for food needs. This plan is building upon lessons learned, etc. from the pandemic.

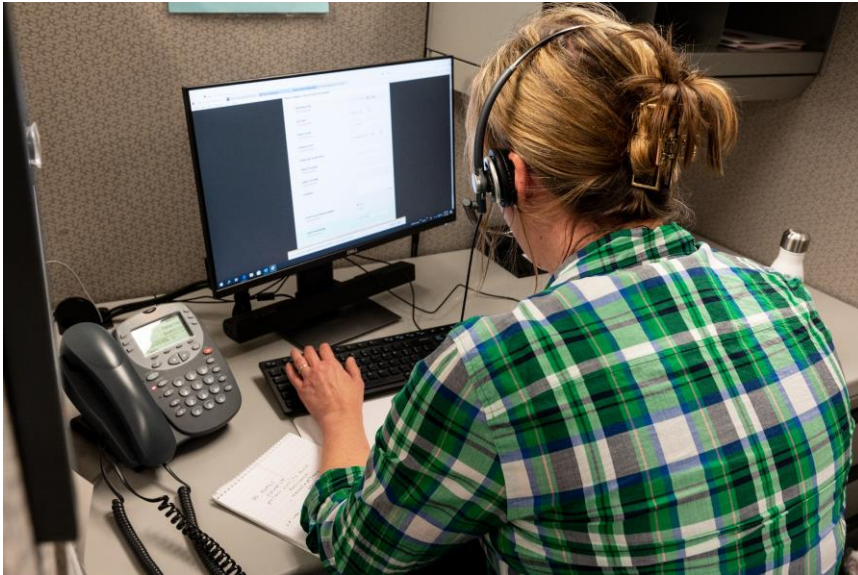




## Strengths

- IT facilitated the implementation of all the new technology as well as the security and other systems necessary for a successful telework operation countywide. The implementation of county laptops, devices, and new platforms in support of telework were successes. Remote access was significantly improved.
- The virtual environment allowed for increased communication throughout the county, which has been an added strength to many departments. County agencies have increased inter-office collaboration and communication with virtual staff meetings, workgroups, chat, document sharing, and other functionalities provided by IT tools.





- **Area for Improvement:** Call centers experienced various issues caused by the number of calls. The inability to forward calls to cell phones at some call centers prevented staff from working virtually.
- **Recommendation:** Assess the current phone infrastructure and updates needed and/or new systems needed to support increased phone traffic for county agencies. DIT is working on implementation of an enterprise call center platform that will integrate with other platforms like Teams.



## Strengths

- The establishment of the Joint Information Center (JIC) successfully provided the mechanism for countywide communicators to assess and pivot communication strategy based on feedback from the community. JIC operations and coordination led to educational publications that were received well by community members. The JIC was also successful at releasing messages quickly and through various channels, such as the website, telephone systems with automated messages, social media, and staff handing out hard copy information, to reach the public countywide.
- Communications with the approximately 90 Boards, Authorities, and Commissions (BACs) was managed through the BAC liaisons. This enabled swift, clear, and concise communications that weaved in guidance from multiple agencies, including items such as templates, flow charts, FAQs, legal guidance, IT, budget guidance, etc., all in one communication path.



- **Area for Improvement:** With the shift to virtual operations, there were both pros and cons for external communications. Some communities were reached better through the virtual methods, yet some could not be reached virtually at all, creating inequities in public messaging that had to be addressed through other methods.
- **Recommendation:** Evaluate more ways and methods for how to provide better two-way communication with county residents.





## Strengths

- Various agencies adapted operations and service delivery models to meet the needs of residents. Some examples include “Assistance from a Distance,” remote court hearings, and the Equity Customer Coordinator role for permitting.
- The targeting of testing and communities most heavily impacted was based on case data and the COVID-19 Vulnerability Index.
  - **Opportunity:** The use of data is essential to identifying communities most impacted by COVID-19. Data should be used in future events to ensure that response is targeted to the population as a whole as well as to populations and geographic areas most affected.



## Strengths

- County agencies communicated with residents in various formats and in ways that were relevant to life situations to ensure that residents had the information and resources necessary to protect themselves and their families. The communications team was successful in their multi-cultural communications efforts, translation activities, and other efforts to ensure disparities were addressed and public messaging was making the widest reach possible within the county.



- **Area for Improvement:** Equity data should be a consideration in decision making for continuity of operations, emergency preparedness, response, and recovery across the county per the One Fairfax Policy.
- **Recommendation:** Provide leadership and department staff equity tools and materials to reference for decision making and planning throughout the emergency to ensure that equity is considered. Make equity part of plans referenced during an emergency.



- **Area for Improvement:** Internal and external communication about how the emergency is affecting different populations and parts of the county can be improved.
- **Recommendation:** Describe who is affected and why in internal and external communications and target response efforts accordingly.





### Next Steps

- Provide the Board the draft report for review.
- Schedule interviews with each Board office.
- Develop surveys to collect input from:
  - Public
  - NGO's
  - Private Sector
- Work with FCHD to ensure we have no gaps between their internal report and the county after action.

### County AAR Part 2 Focus Areas

- County Program Changes
  - A. Support to Private Sector (RISE Grants, new permit process, etc.)
  - B. Support for Residents (feeding operations, NCS, SRS, etc.)
- Government Operations
  - A. Pandemic's Impact on Government Operations
    - Resumption of normal operations from July 2021 to December 2021
- Additional areas requiring further investigation identified in Part 1.

Part 2 is underway and projected to be completed 7/31/2022.